

Atlantean language

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For the language from the Stargate franchise, see [Ancient \(Stargate\)](#).

The **Atlantean language** is a [constructed language](#) created by [Marc Okrand](#) specially for the [Walt Disney Feature Animation](#) film *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*. The language was intended by the script-writers to be a possible mother language, and Okrand crafted it to include a vast [Indo-European](#) word stock with its very own grammar, which is at times described as highly [agglutinative](#), inspired by [Sumerian](#) and [North American Indigenous languages](#).

Atlantean

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Pronunciation | dig adlantisag |
| Created by | Marc Okrand |
| Date | 1996–2001 |
| Setting and usage | 2001 film <i>Atlantis: The Lost Empire</i> and related media |
| Purpose | constructed languages Artistic languages Fictional languages Atlantean |
| Writing system | Atlantean Script |
| Sources | Constructed languages A posteriori languages |
| Language codes | |
| ISO 639-3 | None (mis) |
| Glottolog | None |
| IETF | art-x-atlantea |

Creation

Linguist [Marc Okrand](#) was hired by Disney to create the Atlantean language.

The Atlantean language (*Dig Adlantisag*) is a historically [constructed](#), [artistic language](#) put together by Marc Okrand for Disney's 2001 film *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* and associated media.^[1] The Atlantean language is therefore based both on [historic reconstructions](#) as well as on the elaborate [fantasy/science fiction](#) of the *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* mythos. The fictional principles upon which the Atlantean language was created are: Atlantean is the “[Tower of Babel language](#)”, the “[root dialect](#)” from which all languages descended; it has existed without change since sometime before 100,000 B.C., in the First or Second Age of Atlantis until the present.

To accomplish this, Okrand looked for common characteristics from various world languages and was also heavily inspired by the [Proto-Indo-European language](#). His main source of words ([roots](#) and [stems](#)) for the language is Proto-Indo-European,^[1] but Okrand combines this with [Biblical Hebrew](#), later Indo-European languages such as [Latin](#) and [Greek](#), and a variety of other known or reconstructed ancient languages.^{[2][3][4]}

Writing systems

Atlantean has its own script created expressly for the movie by [John Emerson](#) with the help of Marc Okrand, and inspired by [ancient alphabetical scripts](#), most notably Semitic. There are, however, different kinds of [transliteration](#) into the [Roman script](#).

Atlantean Script

The Atlantean script and numerals

There is no punctuation or capitalization in the native Atlantean Writing System. Okrand based this on ancient writing systems. The Atlantean Script is normally in [boustrophedon](#), that is to say it is written left to right for the first line, right to left the second, and left to right again the third, to continue the pattern. This order was also suggested by Okrand, based on ancient writing systems, and it was accepted because, as he explained, "It's a back-and-forth movement, like water, so that worked."^{[1][5]}

The Atlantean script includes more characters than are actually employed in the language itself. These letters being c, f, j, q, v, x, z, ch, or th, they were created so that Atlantean might be used as a simple [cipher](#) code in the media and for promotional purposes. They are all also based on diverse ancient characters, just like the rest of the alphabet.^[1]

Roman Script

Apart from the native Atlantean script created for the show, the language can be transcribed using the Roman script. There are two versions for doing so:

Example sentence, broken down:

Nishentop

NEE-shen-toap

spirit-PL.(plural number)-VOC.(vocative case)

Adlantisag,

AHD-luhn-tih-suhg,

Atlantis-GEN.(genitive case),

kelobtem

KEH-loab-tem

chamber-ACC.(accusative case)

Gabrin

GAHB-rihn

2.(second person).PL.(plural number).FAM.(familiar register)-GEN.(genitive case)

karoklimik

KAH-roak-lih-mihk

defile-PPERF.(past perfect)-1.(first person).SG.(singular number)

bet

bet

for
gim
gihm
and
demottem
DEH-moat-tem
land-ACC (accusative case)

net
net
into
getunosentem
GEH-tuh-noh-sen-tem

intruder-PL (plural number)-ACC (accusative case)
bernotlimik
behr-NOAT-lih-mihk

bring-PPERF (past perfect)-1 (first person).SG (singular number)
bet
bet
for
kagib
KAH-gihib

1 (first person).SG (singular number)-DAT (dative case)
lewidyoh.
LEH-wihd-yoakh.

forgive-IMP (imperative mood)-PL (plural number)

"Spirits of Atlantis, forgive me for defiling your chamber and bringing intruders into the land."

The following is a table that shows the correspondences between the different modes of transcription and also provides the probable IPA values.^{[5][8][9]}

| Standard Transcription | a | b | g | d | e | u | w | h | i | y | k | l | m | n | o | p | r | s | sh | t |
|---------------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|--------|--------|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Reader's Script | ah, uh | b | g | d | eh, e | oo, u | w | kh | ee, ih | y | k | l | m | n | oa, oh | p | r | s | sh | t |
| IPA | [a, ə] | [b] | [g] | [d] | [e, ɛ] | [u, ɔ] | [w] | [x] | [i, ɪ] | [j] | [k] | [l] | [m] | [n] | [o, ɔ] | [p] | [r, ɔ] | [s] | [ʃ] | [t] |

Numerals

John Emerson, Marc Okrand, and the filmmakers also created numerals for 0–9. They are stacked horizontally, however, and hold place values of 1, 20, and 400. Their components are based on [Mayan numerals](#) and internally composed for the font (example above) like [Roman numerals](#). If used according to the now-offline Official Website's directions, they are used, alternatively, like [Arabic numerals](#).^{[1][6][10]}

| Numeral | Atlantean | English |
|---------|----------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | <i>din</i> | one |
| 2 | <i>dut</i> | two |
| 3 | <i>sey</i> | three |
| 4 | <i>kut</i> | four |
| 5 | <i>sha</i> | five |
| 6 | <i>luk</i> | six |
| 7 | <i>tos</i> | seven |
| 8 | <i>ya</i> | eight |
| 9 | <i>nit</i> | nine |
| 10 | <i>ehep</i> | ten |
| 20 | <i>dut dehep</i> | twenty |
| 30 | <i>sey dehep</i> ^[12] | thirty |
| 40 | <i>kut dehep</i> | forty |
| 50 | <i>sha dehep</i> | fifty |
| 60 | <i>luk dehep</i> | sixty |
| 70 | <i>tos dehep</i> | seventy |
| 80 | <i>ya dehep</i> | eighty |
| 90 | <i>nit dehep</i> | ninety |

[Cardinal numbers](#)^[11]

Numeral suffixes

[Ordinals](#) are formed adding the suffix *-(d)lag*: *sey* 'three', *seydlag* 'third'. The *d* is omitted if the root ends with an [obstruent](#) or [nasal consonant](#): *dut* 'two', *dutlag* 'second'.^[13] Fractions are formed with the suffix *-(d)lop*: *kut* 'four', *kutlop* 'quarter', *sha* 'five', *shadlop* 'fifth (part)'.^[14] And finally, distributives are formed with the suffix *noh*: *din* 'one', *dinnoh* 'one at a time, one each'.^[13]

Phonology

Consonants

| Bilabial | Alveolar | (Alveolo-) palatal | Velar |
|----------|----------|-----------------------|-------|
|----------|----------|-----------------------|-------|

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|---|-------|-------|
| <u>Nasal</u> | m | n | | |
| <u>voiceless</u> | p | t | k | |
| <u>Plosive</u> | <u>voiced</u> | b | d | g |
| <u>Fricative</u> | | s | ʃ [a] | x [b] |
| <u>Approximant</u> | w | l | j [c] | |
| <u>Trill</u> | | r | | |

IPA chart of Atlantean consonants

1. ^ Transliterated as <sh> in Writer's Script and Reader's Script.
2. ^ Transliterated as <h> in Writer's Script (bibix, inner cover of Subterranean Tours) and <kh> in Reader's Script.
3. ^ Transliterated as <y> in Writer's Script and Reader's Script.

Vowels

Atlantean's phonetic inventory includes a vowel system with five phonemes. Most vowels have two prominent allophonic realizations, depending on whether it occurs in a stressed or unstressed syllable.

| | <u>Front</u> | <u>Central</u> | <u>Back</u> | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|-----|
| | Tense | Lax | Tense | Lax |
| <u>High</u> | i | ɪ | u | ʊ |
| <u>Mid</u> | e | ɛ | o | ɔ |
| <u>Low</u> | | a | ə | |

IPA chart of Atlantean vowels

Vowels in stressed syllables tend to be tense, and likewise unstressed ones tend to be more lax. Thus, for example, /i/ is realized as [i] or [ɪ] in stressed and unstressed syllables, respectively. Likewise, /e/ is realized as [e] or [ɛ], and so on. There are three diphthongs, namely ay, ey, oy.

Aside from the stressed-syllable-based vowel system, the only other example of prominent phonological phenomenon seems to be a special kind of sandhi occurring in verbs, when the pronoun is combined with the aspect marker.

When the suffix for the first person singular -ik combines with tenses that employ -i, -o (Past and Future tenses), it becomes -mik.

bernot-o-ik → bernot-o-mik

But when combined with suffixes that feature -e (Present tenses), the same suffix becomes -kik.

bernot-e-ik → bernot-e-kik

Grammar

Atlantean has a very strict subject-object-verb word order, with no deviations from this pattern attested. Adjectives and nouns in the genitive case follow the nouns they modify, adpositions appear only in the form of postpositions, and modal verbs follow the verbs that they modify and subsequently take all personal and

aspectual suffixes. However, adverbs precede verbs. The language includes the use of an interrogative particle to form questions with no variation in word order.^[1]

Some sentences appear to employ some kind of particles sometimes termed "sentence connectors". These particles are of obscure meaning but are theorized to relate two clauses in a logical yet idiomatic manner.^[1] The exact meaning and usage of these particles is not known, but without them sentences are difficult to reconcile with their translations.

ex:

Wiltem

city-ACC (accusative case)

neb

DEM (demonstrative)

gamosetot

see-PRES (present tense)-3SG (third person singular)

deg

PART (particle)

duweren

outsider-PL (plural number)

tirid.

all.

"No outsiders may see the city and live."

(But more literally: "He sees the city PARTICLE all outsiders.")

In the example above there is no actual mention of the consequences for outsiders, yet the subtitle in the movie translates it as a warning even without any mention of living or dying. A possibility exists that, in order to match the lip movement of the characters in the movie and the time of the dialogue, the language had to be shortened, often leaving out key parts of the sentence. It is known that the Atlantean lines in the movie were ad-libbed afterwards.

ex:

Tab.top,

father-VOC (vocative case),

lud.en

person-PL (plural number)

neb.et

DEM (demonstrative)-PL (plural number)

kwam

NEG (negation/negative)

gesu

help

bog.e.kem

be able-PRES.(present tense)-1SG.(first person singular)

deg

PART.(particle)

yasek.en

noble-PL.(plural number)

gesu.go.ntoh.

help-FUT.(future tense).PQSB.(possible)-3PL.(third person plural)

"Father, these people may be able to help us."

(But more literally: "Oh Father, we cannot help these people PARTICLE they will help the nobles."^[1]

In this example the sentences seem to be better connected, and the particle is rendered as almost "but, yet". It is difficult to reconcile the two, however.

Nouns

Atlantean has seven cases for nouns, five for pronouns and two for numbers.

Grammatical cases

| Name | Suffix | Example | English Gloss |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Nominative</u> | no suffix | yob | the crystal (subject). |
| <u>Accusative</u> | -tem | yobtem | the crystal (object). |
| <u>Genitive</u> | -ag | yobag | of the crystal |
| <u>Vocative</u> | -top | Yobtop | O Crystal! |
| <u>Instrumental</u> | -esh | yobesh | using crystal |
| <u>Essive</u> | -kup | yobkup | (as, composed of, being) crystal |
| <u>Dative</u> | -nuh | yobnuh | (for, to, on behalf of) crystal |

Grammatical Cases

Notes:

1. [▲] With the exception of "mat", "mother", which takes the special Maternal Filial Suffix -tim. Note that the only other kinship term, "father", "tab", takes the usual -top.
2. [▲] As discussed in "The Shepherd's Journal" on the "Collector's DVD": ketub-kup (page 4) and setub-mok-en-tem (page 10), setub-mok-en-ag (page 5), and setub-kup (pages 1–4).
3. [▲] As discussed in "The Shepherd's Journal" on the "Collector's DVD": derup-tem and derup-nuh (page 5).

Other suffixes

| Grammatical Function | Suffix | Example | English Gloss |
|----------------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| Plural | -en | yoben | crystals |

Other Noun Suffixes

Nouns are marked as plural with the suffix *-en*. Case suffixes never precede the *-en* plural suffix. "-Mok" occurs after it.

Pronouns

| | Singular | Plural |
|-------------------|-------------|--------|
| 1st person | kag | gwis |
| unfamiliar | moh | gebr |
| 2nd person | familiar | gabr |
| 3rd person | tug tuh tok | sob |

Independent Pronoun

| | Singular | Plural |
|-------------------|----------|--------|
| 1st person | -ik | -kem |
| 2nd person | -en | -eh |
| 3rd person | -ot | -toh |

Suffix

There are five cases for pronouns.

Grammatical cases

| Name | Suffix | Example | English Gloss |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|--|
| <u>Nominative</u> | no suffix | kag | I |
| <u>Accusative</u> | -it | kagit | me, whom was (sent), etc. |
| <u>Dative</u> | -ib | kagib | (to) me |
| <u>Genitive</u> | -in | kagin | my (my heart, karod kagin) |
| <u>Instrumental</u> | -is | kagis | by my means, with (using) me, via me, etc. |

Grammatical Cases

Notes:

1. [▲] The pronoun analog to the noun instrumental case suffix *-esh*. Appears in "First Mural Text" on the "Collector's DVD": *tug-is*.

Verbs

Verbs are inflected with two suffixes, one for tense/aspect and the next for person/number.^[1]

Tense/aspect suffixes

| | Name | Suffix | Example | Other Examples |
|---------|--------------------|---------------|---|---|
| Present | Simple Present | -e | bernot.e.kik bring-PRES.(present.tense)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I bring | sapoh.e.kik I view |
| | Present Perfect | -le | bernot.le.kik bring-PRES.(present.tense).PERF.(perfect)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I have brought | |
| | Present Obligatory | -se | bernot.se.kik bring-PRES.(present.tense).OBLG.(obligatory.mood)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I am obliged to bring | kaber.se.kem we are obliged to warn |
| Past | Simple Past | -i | bernot.i.mik bring-PAST.(past.tense)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I brought | es.i.mot it was sapoh.i.mik I viewed |
| | Immediate Past | -ib | bernot.ib.mik bring-JMM.(immediate).PAST.(past.tense)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I just brought | |
| | Past Perfect | -li | bernot.li.mik bring-PAST.(past.tense).PERF.(perfect)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I had brought | |
| Future | Simple Future | -o | bernot.o.mik bring-FUT.(future.tense)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I will bring | komtib.o.nen you will find |
| | Future Possible | -go | bernot.go.mik bring-FUT.(future.tense).POSB.(possible)-1SG.(first.person.singular) I may bring | gesu.go.ntoh they may help |

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|--|--------------------------------------|
| Future Perfect | -lo | bernot.lo.mik bring-FUT (future tense).PERF (perfect)-1SG.(first person.singular) | komtib.lo.nen you will have found |
| | | I will have brought | |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----|--|--|
| Future Obligatory | -so | bernot.so.mik bring-FUT (future tense).OBLG (obligatory mood)-1SG (first person.singular) | komtib.so.nen you will be obliged to find |
| | | I will be obliged to bring | |

Tense/Aspect suffixes

Mood and Voice suffixes

| Name | Suffix | Example | English Gloss |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|--|
| Imperative Mood Singular | no suffix | bernot!, nageb! | <i>bring!, enter!</i> |
| Imperative Mood Plural | -yoh | bernot.yoh!, nageb.yoh! | <i>(you all) bring!, (you all) enter!</i> |
| Passive Voice | -esh | pag.esh.e.nen, bernot.esh.ib.mik | <i>you are thanked (thank you), I was just brought</i> |
| Infinitive | -e | bernot.e, wegen.e, gamos.e | <i>to bring, to travel, to see</i> |

Mood suffixes

See also

[Languages in Star Wars](#) - Another Disney property with constructed languages

Notes

1. ^{a b c d e f g h i} "Production Notes." *Atlantis-The Lost Empire*. Ed. Tim Montgomery, 1996–2007. The Unofficial Disney Animation Archive. 13 January 2007. [Animationarchive.net](#)
2. ^a Kalin-Casey, Mary. "Charting Atlantis the crew behind Disney's latest animated adventure takes you behind the scenes." Features Interviews. 17 January 2007 [Reel.com](#) Archived January 18, 2006, at the [Wayback Machine](#)
3. ^a Murphy, Tab, Platon, David Reynolds, Gary Trousdale, Joss Whedon, Kirk Wise, Bryce Zabel, and Jackie Zabel. *Atlantis the Lost Empire: The Illustrated Script [Abridged Version with Notes from the Filmmakers]*, 55.
4. ^a Henn, Peter (June 1, 2001). "[Finding Atlantis](#)". *Film Journal International*. Archived from [the original](#) on January 16, 2014. Retrieved August 30, 2011.
5. ^{a b} Włoszczyna, Susan. "New movie trek for wordsmith." USA Today Online. 24 May 2001. 12 Jan. 2007. [USA Today](#).
6. ^{a b c} Anderson, Matt. "Parlez-vous Atlantean?" Movie Habit. 12 January 2006 [Moviehabit.com](#)
7. ^a Henning, Jeffrey. "Atlantean: Language of the Lost Empire". Jeffrey Henning. September 2001. [Langmaker.com](#) "[Interview of Don Hahn on Atlantis!"](#) Animagic.Com. 3/26/01.
8. ^a Kurtti, Jeff. *Atlantis Subterranean Tours: A Traveler's Guide to the Lost City (Atlantis the Lost Empire)*. New York: Disney Editions: 2001, Inside Front Cover.

9. [▲] Hahn, Don; Wise, Kirk; Trousdale, Gary et al. 2-Disc Collector's Edition: *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, especially Features "How to Speak Atlantean", "The Shepherd's Journal".
10. [▲] John, David. *Atlantis: The Lost Empire: The Essential Guide*. New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc., 2001, 33.
11. [▲] Kurtti, Jeff. *Atlantis Subterranean Tours: A Traveler's Guide to the Lost City (Atlantis the Lost Empire)*. New York: Disney Editions: 2001, 60.
12. [▲] Kurtti, Jeff. *Atlantis Subterranean Tours: A Traveler's Guide to the Lost City (Atlantis the Lost Empire)*. New York: Disney Editions: 2001, 31.
13. [▲] Hahn, Don; Wise, Kirk; Trousdale, Gary et al. 2-Disc Collector's Edition: *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, 01 10 0:50:31.

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External links
